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## THE FUNCTIONS OF ETHICAL THEORY.

Two questions may be asked in regard to our subject: First, why is it that any disturbance in ethical speculation at once brings men up in arms about the consequences? Second, why is there such a tendency even in speculative ethics to bring its theories into harmony and sympathy with "practical" problems?

The preliminary answer to this question is the distinction between *science* and *art*. We shall not enter into this exhaustively. We shall dwell upon it only long enough to establish some comprehensive conceptions and principles by which to determine the subject of our discussion. The sequel of this is to be not only the functions actually exercised by various ethical theories in their isolation, but a statement of their relation to each other as distinct attitudes of mind towards the same problem.

A science assumes facts and endeavors to reduce them to some form of unity. In some cases it seeks classification; in others it seeks uniformity of connection between phenomena. In regard to the relations of *objects*, its method and aim is classification by resemblances; in regard to *events*, it is explanation by causes. In both we proceed *regressively*; in one to find *genera*, in the other to find *antecedents*. The aim is to explain a fact by showing the derivation of its content or qualities, or the cause of its existence. An art, on the other hand, assumes ideas or conceptions, truths or principles, and endeavors to realize an end. It looks forward instead of backward, *progressively* to ends or consequences, not to causes. The aim of science is to find causes; the aim of art to produce ends by means of these causes. Science may also find principles which may be more than causes in the physical sense; art will apply them. Achievement, therefore, not explanation, is the object of art. But it may be divided, as by Greek thinkers, into *productive* (ποιητική) and *practical* (πρακτική)

art; the former aiming to leave behind its activity some material result, and the latter to terminate in action without a material result, and so often spoken of as action for its own sake. There is a result connected with it, but it is moral, spiritual, or intellectual compared with the material effect of productive art. But the common characteristic of both the "productive" and the "practical" arts is that of directing thought and effort to an unrealized end, some object which is not yet a fact, except in so far as it is an idea in consciousness. It is this direction of thought to an end rather than the direction of it towards antecedent causes that is to be emphasized, because it draws the line of distinction between science and art. But the difference between the ends of the "productive" and the "practical" arts gives rise to the question: "To which of the two spheres does ethics belong, and how are both its methods and its theories affected by the answer?"

Aristotle placed it among the "practical" arts, but treated it, like many other philosophers of his age and race, as a science, and among thinkers of the present day it is universally spoken of as a science and seldom treated as an art. The fact is that every consideration of its scope and aim shows it to be both a science and an art. As a science it endeavors to explain something; as an art, to realize something. This combination of functions complicates every problem in connection with it, and in the sequel it will be seen to explain why life and conduct are so sensitive to changes of speculative views entertained respecting them. It is, in this complex nature of its functions, quite different from most, if not all, the other sciences, although they are not excluded from an important relation to the arts. This marked difference is clearly expressed in the fact that the names of the physical, mathematical, and even metaphysical sciences, if such be possible, are not used to denote the corresponding art to which they contribute from their results. We never think of physics as an art. The same can be said of chemistry, geology, botany, zoology, biology, anthropology, sociology, mathematics, psychology, theology, etc. We regard them only as occupied with the establishment of general

causes or general truths. Mechanics, perhaps, will be the art corresponding to physics; mining to chemistry and geology; engineering to mathematics and physics; architecture to mathematics, physics, and æsthetics. The truth here indicated is well enough known, but we are not always conscious of its importance for the way in which the mind acts when a scientific theory undergoes a change. Moreover, the single application of the terms helps to keep perfectly clear and distinct the difference between the theoretical and practical aspects of the various subjects investigated.

But in contrast with this, when we come to the term "ethics" we find that it has to do duty for both a science and an art. It must be apparent at once that this double denotation is likely to lead to confusion of thought. It does so perpetually. But perhaps this confusion would be very slight and easily corrected were it not for a still more important fact than any we have yet emphasized. The difference between the object of the other sciences and the object of the arts to which they contribute is so great that a tendency to confusion is easily detected or evaded. As sciences they are occupied solely with *antecedents*; their corresponding arts are occupied with *consequences*; the former with causes, the latter with ends. But ethics, both as a science and an art, is occupied solely with *ends*, and never with the investigation of causes. This fact, no doubt, explains why the same term was so readily adopted to denominate the two spheres, the theoretical and the practical, and it has a very wide-reaching significance for the perpetual complication of conceptions and functions belonging to the ethical problem. Instead of being clear and distinct as between the sciences and arts generally, they are fused together in common conceptions and formulas. The same subject-matter is viewed from the stand-point of both a science and an art. This subject-matter is the *summum bonum*, or the highest good. As a science ethics endeavors to ascertain what the *summum bonum* is; as an art to realize it. As a science it aims to *explain* something; as an art, to *effect* it. Its complications are thus twofold. It not only combines the functions of a science and an art, but combines

them upon the same subject-matter, so that the mind is never assured in regard to which direction its thought must be turned when called to consider ethical formulas and principles.

But what we have said is only a most general statement of what the functions of ethics are. We have not intimated their ramifications, nor the manner in which they determine the character and influence of ethical theories. This is the topic which demands our special attention, and to that we give our immediate consideration. The elucidation can be effected, however, only by some further remarks, defining a little more technically the functions of an ethical theory, or such as are generally demanded of it.

As usually treated by writers, ethics investigates both the *origin* and the *nature* of moral faculties, data, ideas, principles, etc. Mr. Sidgwick justly remarks that the origin of "moral faculty" seems hardly a proper function of ethics, but it has actually been discussed at great length and with considerable interest under that title rather than as a question of psychology or natural history, and hence without deciding for or against the legitimacy of its treatment under ethics we have only to observe that wherever it is discussed it is conducted as a science of causes or history. Ethics, then, as occupied with the origin of "moral faculty," is historical and etiological in its method, and to that extent identifies its object with the method and aims of the physical sciences. We know without comment what confusion has crept into ethical theory rather surreptitiously by the inferences from the origin of "moral faculty" and ideas to their contents and validity. But as we are not specially concerned with this feature of the problem, we may dismiss it from our view, and confine ourselves to the scientific function of ethics as applied to the *nature* of moral facts and principles. In reference to this field, ethics may be a science in two distinct relations; that is, scientifically it endeavors to determine two distinct facts. *First*, it aims to show the general conception which will reduce the multiplex phenomena and the various motives *actually* governing human conduct to unity, to a comprehensive principle. Some men seek fame, some wealth, some

honor, some righteousness, etc. But are these ends distinct from each other and ultimate? If they can be reduced to a single comprehensive end, say happiness, perfection, duty, conformity to law, etc., a scientific function is fulfilled in explaining them. But this method only explains these phenomena as facts, or reduces to unity what is actually practised; it does not imply any judgment of their value or of the moral quality attaching to the principle thus comprehensively formulated. It does not pronounce upon the character of the conduct which it merely explains. In this function of its application ethics is classificatory, not legislative. It is content with making actual human conduct intelligible, whether it be ideal or not. *Second*, it aims to show the end that ought *ideally* to govern conduct. The distinction between its two scientific functions, as we have recognized them, is here the common one, that between explaining what *is* and indicating what *ought to be*. The importance of this is too familiar to require comment, but we must remark how it indicates the transition from the purely explanatory to the purely legislative functions of ethical conceptions. Ethical theory is expected to supply both of these desiderata, and often as well the genesis of moral phenomena. Its complications are therefore manifest. But its two scientific functions as just defined require further consideration in order to make us more clearly appreciate what has actually been undertaken by various ethical theories.

To illustrate both aspects of the question we may start with the assertion of many writers on ethics, that pleasure is the comprehensive end sought by all men, or by the majority of mankind. But a further question may be proposed: Is it the ideal end of conduct? We do not intend to answer this question *pro* or *con* at present. We are concerned only with the possibility of entertaining it. Some actually deny that it is the ideal or imperative end of conduct. Whether they are consistent or successful in maintaining their denial is a matter of no concern at present. But to them it appears admissible enough, perhaps, that all men *do* seek pleasure as their ultimate end, but with them the question is whether this end

*ought* to be pursued. They can admit that it actually explains the conduct of men as it is, but may insist upon knowing whether it is ideal. And again, they may deny the fact that all men are moved exclusively by pleasure and indicate some other motive, but not because they mean to imply by this denial the illegitimacy of all conduct so motivated, but only that the motive of pleasure does not explain all the facts. On the other hand again, they may admit that it is both the actual motive of all conduct, and that as a uniform concomitant of all healthy action it has a legitimate place to consideration in all moral theories, but that owing to its indefiniteness and ambiguity we require to specify a certain quantity or quality of pleasure as the ideal and imperative end of conduct, and which may be superior to that which is actually pursued. In all such cases, however, the implication is that the *supreme* object of ethics as a science is to determine the ideal as contrasted with the actual. In this latter function of ethical theory both its object and its method are distinct from those of the other sciences. In the first of the two objects it is at one with the methods and aims of the physical sciences, barring the investigation of causes,—namely, the classification and deduction of facts. It simply explains actual conduct without any reference to the distinction between moral and immoral. But in the second function it is dealing with ideals, and must either regard the actual and the ideal as identical, in which case there is no necessity for ethics as a legislative art, because in that assumption nothing is left unrealized which it is the business of ethics to urge as imperative; or it must posit some new conception over and above those actually representing the aims of conduct, or having that differential about it which will mark the contrast between morality and immorality. It is possible even that this ideal conception may be a modification of actual ends, effected by specifying a particular quantity or quality of their characteristics, but indicating that the whole extent of their ideal nature is not yet realized. It is thus not only explaining conduct, but explaining what it ought to be.

But it is to be remarked that, in these its scientific functions,

ethical theory has no other desire than to present a general truth. It is not designed to produce any practical result, to achieve an end, to appeal to a motive which does or ought to act with men as a predominant inclination to volition in a given way, but it is designed as in the other sciences, to establish a principle to which particular phenomena may be reduced, or to which certain modes of action can or ought to be adjusted. As a science it does not enjoin ideal ends; it merely settles that they are ideal, and that they fulfil the demands made upon a theory to supply a consistent and satisfactory principle in answer to certain questions. This end may be pleasure, perfection, duty, law of reason, or anything else we please. It is the function of pure science to furnish truth, not stimulus to action. Astronomy, for instance, is concerned with the explanation of stellar and planetary, or cosmological phenomena, and when it enunciates a truth or a theory it does not care whether the result conforms to any desired or desirable object of human life or not, and as science does not care how it affects action. When Newton proposed gravitation he intended to explain certain phenomena, and did not stop to consider whether his conception related to conduct either actual or ideal. He was occupied solely with determining the truth, and the same is true of every scientific hypothesis involving general causes and general principles. As a pure science ethics need not do more. But, as we have already remarked, ethics seeks the *end* of action as its general principle, and so besides the mere truth about the explanatory function of this conception its subject-matter is at once complicated with the matter of consequences in conduct, and hence its formula cannot be enunciated without revealing a *practical* relation of the science involved in its theoretical principle. Nevertheless we must not ignore the fact that *as* a science ethics need not consider whether its conclusions are practical or not. All that can be rationally expected of it under this limitation is that it be true, that it explain facts, that it be consistent, and that it be complete. If its conclusions are true it will satisfy scientific demands, although the theory may be as useless for practical ends



as the theory of fluxions may be for the organization of a government.

But this is only a paradoxical way of stating the distinction between theoretical and practical interests. It is true that all theories have some relation to "practical" affairs, but they do not have to consult this relation as a primary condition of their truth. But the fact that ethics, even as a science, does not look to causes and antecedents, but to *ends*, which describe the whole sphere of the "practical," gives its theories a closer relation to that sphere than those of other sciences, and explains the fact that, from the very dawn of speculation about the subject, the human mind has persisted in thinking of it as a "practical" science, or "practical" philosophy, an expression which is a self-contradiction in its strictest meaning. But the superficial contradiction of mere usage cannot be urged with any seriousness when we take into account the real meaning intended to be conveyed by it. Being a theory about the "practical," it was natural to expect of any truth thus represented that something "practical" should come out of it. Hence at this point ethics, as a science, shows its contact with a field quite distinct and insensibly passes over into it, complicating all its problems in this relation and by the easy transition of the mind from one to the other.

We have said that as a pure science ethics does not have a "practical" object in view, although its subject-matter is the "practical" field. But it is quite otherwise when we come to consider it as an art. The aim of an art, as we have shown, is to realize an end, and in formulating its principles it does not suffice that they are true speculatively or theoretically. They must appeal to the inclinations of those who are in pursuit of an end. Its formulas must not only satisfy scientific curiosity, but they must represent a conception which appeals to the will. This important function we shall designate *motive efficiency*, in distinction from explanatory power. When we demand of an ethical theory that it have motive efficiency, we do not mean that the theory *per se* have this power, but that the principle which it recognizes as the fundamental ethical

norm have this efficacy. This is what is meant, consciously or unconsciously, when general opinion demands that ethics, or ethical theory, be "practical." Ethics, therefore, as an art aims at motive efficiency. It does not refuse the services of its scientific functions, but endeavors to formulate those truths in such a way that they will carry with them a predominant inclination to act with regard to given ends. But the subject-matter of ethics, both as a science and an art, being the same, its formulas will be charged with the double function of explanatory and motive efficacy. If the highest ideal cannot be made efficacious some condescension must be made to proximate ideals, or mental and moral forces actually operating, to secure as much conformity to desirable ends as is possible and practical. That is, even the highest theoretical ideals, to become "practical," must make some concessions to the motive agencies existing below them. Two demands are, therefore, made upon ethical theories: first, that they be true; second, that they be "practical,"—that is, have motive efficiency. But these two qualities do not uniformly imply each other. They are so different in their nature that a theory may be true and yet exercise no influence upon the will; or it may represent the motive efficient of conduct and yet not completely satisfy the conscience. Thus, it may be true that moral distinctions are irresolvable and founded in the nature of things, but the recognition of this fact has no practical influence as a stimulus to action. It does not express a motive to volition. On the other hand, pleasure and pain may be the only motives to which we can appeal for regulating conduct in those who are governed by fear or personal interest, but such conduct does not attain the full measure of merit that consciousness accords to complete morality. It represents only external morality without its proper condition and correlate, moral character. It is this contingency of connection between conduct and character that introduces so many complications into ethical theory, by multiplying the means for realizing an ideal end when that ideal remains constant. The theory endeavors, of course, to recognize all the data that will be of service to ethics as an art, but its motive

efficiency will depend, not upon the truth of these data, but upon the extent to which they are actual forces in human conduct. Hence in so far as it is designed to realize the comprehensive ideal of the science, or such proximate ideals as are practical and possible, it must be occupied with the means available for that object, and these may be far below the best which the pure theory would sanction as meeting its just demands. But nevertheless they are necessary elements of ethical theory so far as it is at all related to practical problems. The fact merely proves that ethics, besides being explanatory of facts and ideal ends, must adjust itself, as an art, to the conditions of human nature, although it is not necessary on that account to relax its sympathy with the ideal. But the necessity of concession for practical efficiency shows how wide a field of thought is covered by it, and that, in addition to presenting scientific truth and ideals, it must divide its motive efficiency, or the principles which it gives that quality, into two distinct forms corresponding to the variable relation between conduct and character. Hence as an art ethics exercises two functions, although both have the common characteristic of motive efficiency, as the two scientific or theoretical functions have the common quality of explanatory power. The first of these functions is its aim to supply the basal motive for determining conduct with reference to some ideal where there is no inclination to seek it voluntarily. This defines the sphere of politics, government, or legislation, or compulsory morality, so to speak. It, of course, reaches no farther than external conduct, and is the employment of force to prevent evil and to indirectly develop better social habits and laws. The motive to which force appeals is that which explains the actual conduct of men, and so this practical function corresponds to the first of the theoretical functions which we have discussed. Its object is either to extend the area of positive law, or to extend positive morality in its objective features into positive law. But in any case the end is given or assumed, and the question is wholly about the nature and the merits of the means to realize it. The second of the practical functions is the aim to supply a fundamental

motive for determining conduct voluntarily, and so to employ reason as opposed to force for realizing an end. This is an aim to reach both internal and external morality, with the consent of the will, and the sphere occupied by this effort is sometimes called "private ethics" in contrast with politics. In it an ultimate or proximate ideal is proposed with a view to its finding a predominant inclination to realize it when known. This corresponds to the second of the theoretical functions of the science, based upon the same datum, the ideal. But the source of confusion comes precisely from this identity. The ideal, on the one hand, is supposed to explain what it is which will satisfy the demand for a better than actual conduct, and on the other, to supply motive efficiency for its own attainment. If it does not meet with such an inclination the ideal remains an ideal, and progress is left no resources save an adjustment of existing motives and forces to realize the best that the circumstances allow. Ethical theory, therefore, if it become "practical" at all, must make some concessions to data lower than its ideal.

In order to illustrate these various functions and their complications, and to explain the tendency to harmonize ethical theory with "practical" considerations as far as possible, we may have recourse to three of the chief ethical theories,—the theological, utilitarian, and what we shall call the moralistic, or Moralism, as opposed to Utilitarianism, and so representing what is sometimes called Formalism. These three points of view cover the general field in which scientific and practical functions of ethical theories are concerned, and it will be our purpose to show what the intellectual development has been from one to the other. We shall examine them as phases of thought without confining ourselves to the views of any particular age or philosopher.

The theological theory was first advanced to explain the existence of positive law, not the rational grounds of positive morality. It was a reference of actual customs to the will of divine beings and reflected the conceptions of arbitrary power which prevailed in that age. The modern form of the theory is quite different, even when it does exalt the influence of

divine will in determining moral distinctions. But the point in common is the idea of authority which invokes the fear of power in order to obtain obedience to a given rule of conduct. While the theological theory was designed and is still designed to explain the origin of moral law, at first the fact of its enactment or existence, and afterwards the source of its ethical qualities, the chief purpose was to obtain a ground for obedience. This fact implies that the theory was serving a double function,—that of explaining something, and that of insuring or encouraging a special line of action. In regard to its explanatory power it was quite natural, as it still is, where the mind resorts at once to the absolute for an explanation of all things, to refer moral facts to the divine. As long as his existence is undisputed and his relation to the phenomena assumed, the reference of moral law, positive or rational, to the will or nature of God is scientific enough. Few would question the ultimate reference of all facts to the Absolute, when it is once granted to exist. But in regard to the usefulness of such a conclusion there might be some dispute after its truth has been admitted. Scientifically useful it might be; that is, it may indicate the metaphysical source or the efficient cause of certain facts and thus satisfy intellectual curiosity, but this was not the main purpose for which the theory was advanced. As we have said, it was intended to invoke authority for certain lines of conduct. In ancient times it appealed to the motive of fear, in modern times to both fear and respect. When a sovereign power enforces its laws it is a sufficient, or at least a very efficient, motive for obedience to know that these laws are commands of that power. Hence where the existence of the divine is admitted and the fear or respect for its authority well established, the theological theory has great motive efficiency in addition to the explanatory power which may be claimed for it.

But it is important to remark that the integrity of these two functions is absolutely conditioned upon the truthfulness of the divine existence. A scientific theory which is not explaining absolutely new phenomena is expected to prove the connection between known laws or causes and the facts to be

explained. In other words, it appeals to admitted principles. The theological theory conforms to this requirement where there is no dispute about its ultimate postulate, but if the divine existence be questioned, both the explanatory and motive efficiency of the theory are destroyed or kept in suspense until the problem of metaphysics and theology is solved. That is, the ethical controversy is shifted to a new field. Now, scepticism usually attacks the theory by disputing its postulate, and not by disputing the relation of moral law to the Absolute, if that postulate be admitted. Hence its assault tells most against the motive efficiency of the theory without directly impeaching its explanatory power. It tacitly grants that this relation of moral law may be admitted, if God's existence be proved, or it leaves entirely open the question of that relation, so that the interest of the problem is to save the effect upon practical morals and to ignore the scientific aspect of it. If scepticism did not come in to disturb the stability of the one condition upon which the motive efficiency of the theory rested it would remain forever a purely scientific question, whether or not the moral law had the relation to the absolute claimed for it. The general interest in it would be very slight in this case, as it would be limited to those curious minds which delight to revel in metaphysical quiddities. Ethics would then be and remain a branch of theology. But its vulnerable point is the perennially disputed question about the divine existence, and scepticism, by showing that this assumption requires proof, suspends all practical influence upon conduct, issuing from the motives of fear or respect, until that all-important truth is established. In the mean time morality may be turned into Pandemonic confusion: not, perhaps, because any such consequence is a necessary one from the doubt of the divine, but because the belief in it had been charged with undue responsibilities, making morality the victim of any change in regard to the theory. But, in challenging the security of the belief in divine existence, scepticism at once undermines the motive efficiency of the theological theory, wherever it has exercised that influence, without necessarily assaulting its scientific conception, and conse-

quently has inculcated the impression, consciously or unconsciously, that moral laws are without any authority, or that their obligatory nature has been mistaken. In any case, however, as a reaction against the idea of authority, it relaxes the respect which the human mind has felt for tradition, and moral rules appear to be left without adequate ground or support.

Whenever scepticism has in any degree succeeded both in discrediting the theological theory and in arousing solicitude for the integrity of moral laws, the reconstructive effort has taken one of two directions, which in Greek parlance were Epicureanism and Platonism, and in modern thought Utilitarianism and Moralism or Rationalism. All schools interested in preserving social order and scientific truth agreed that there were facts needing explanation and that some reason must be assigned as a ground of action. To omit the reconstructive effort of Greek thought, which we have not space to consider, the transition from the theological to the utilitarian point of view is a passage from the idea of a *formal* or an *efficient* to that of a *final* cause for conduct, from an antecedent ground or authority to an ultimate *end* of action.

The utilitarian end, of course, is pleasure in some form. Its chief significance for the functions of ethical theory, however, is the identification of the object of ethics as a science with its object as an art. The end to be sought is conceived, both as the datum to explain something,—namely, the ground of moral law,—and as the object to be realized by it. In the theological view, ethics appeared only as a science not distinctly occupied with any end. Its motive efficiency came less from the merits of a practical object to be accomplished than from the necessity of obeying formal laws or submitting to authority. But the utilitarian position imports a new point of view into the problem, and, if it retains any scientific conceptions at all, it fuses them with the idea of ethics as an art, so that the theoretical and practical functions of this position become merely the obverse and reverse sides of the same fact, and this may explain some of the confusion into which many moralists have been pushed by misunderstanding the terms of the case. A theoretical question is generally assumed to

demand the formal or efficient instead of the final cause of phenomena, and hence, when the problem is shifted to the last field, the prepossessions of the former are likely to exert an influence for creating friction between two different points of view. The method of reconciliation is simple, and that is to show that two distinct problems are evoked by the separate objects of thought. But, dropping the matter of reconciliation, the chief interest at present concerns the functions exercised by Utilitarianism as an ethical theory.

The end, pleasure, to which it appeals must be a datum which either explains certain phenomena or may act as a motive efficient for realizing the object of ethics, or it must do both of these. Now, pleasure undoubtedly explains much if not all of actual conduct. Those who maintain that all men are governed by that motive, perhaps by that motive alone, must regard it as the conception which reduces to unity the manifold phenomena of conduct. It is thus a principle which exercises explanatory power. It shows what common end men seek in the manifold varieties of action they exhibit. Scientific curiosity is therefore in a measure satisfied. But does it, in explaining actual conduct, explain all that a theory of ethics must explain? If so, why is it that mankind, philosophers and laymen alike, are always demanding some ideal conduct better than the actual as the proper aim or attainment of morals? This only implies that however the notion of pleasure may explain actual conduct, it does not express the content of that which is above or beyond the real; that is, it does not express the ideal at which ethics practically aims or seeks to know scientifically, unless the ideal and the actual are identical. But this would only be to say that the ideal was actually realized, and if so, it is absurd for ethics to seek for something beyond the realized ideal. Its functions as a theory would be exhausted in explaining actual facts by reducing them to the unity of this one realized end. It would then have no function as an art to recommend the attainment of another and higher object than the actually realized. Utilitarianism, as a theory, is therefore in a dilemma. If pleasure does not explain actual



conduct, the theory founded upon it fails in explanatory power. On the other hand, if it does explain all men's actions, it satisfies the demand for the ideal only by making that ideal coincide with the actual. But this would be to abandon the postulate upon which all ethics is founded,—namely, the obligation to seek a better than really is. If the ideal and the actual are the same, no duties whatever can exist, and Utilitarianism fails again in explanatory power by not giving an end which *ought* to be realized.

But the fact is that the refutation of Utilitarianism is not so simple. The theory is by no means so absurd as this dilemma would imply. Its advocates do not appeal to simple unqualified pleasure as the explanation of all mysteries in the problem. It may explain all or the most of actual conduct, or it may not: I do not care to decide which it does. But utilitarians respond to the demand for an ideal by setting up differences of quantity or of quality in pleasure as determining the difference between right and wrong. In this way they hope to point out an ideal which is not always realized, and I for my part grant that the conception of such a difference conforms to the demand made upon an ethical theory. Whether quantity or quality of pleasure is the true ideal I do not care to determine. But the distinction implied by the "greatest pleasure" as opposed to a lesser, or a "higher kind of pleasure" as opposed to a lower, does express the difference between what is actually done and what ought to be done, whether it exhausts that difference or not; and hence it accords Utilitarianism that explanatory power which a theory of the ideal must possess in order to be ethical at all. In referring actual conduct to pleasure it exercises the function of a classificatory science, reducing facts to unity. But, since it does not fulfil the proper functions of ethics in this process, it must satisfy the demands of a moral science by telling what the ideal is; which it does by asserting that this datum is the greatest quantity or the highest quality of pleasure. In so far, at least, as these notions coincide with, or imply what is not actually realized, they supply an ideal and exercise explanatory power beyond that which systematizes

the actual. So much may be conceded; and we find, therefore, two important functions exhibited by Utilitarianism; but we may still ask whether it fully explains the quality of *virtue* attaching to conduct approved as right. Does the pursuit of pleasure, of any quantity or quality, imply that characteristic of merit which is given to conduct under the inspiration of duty or Kant's imperative? Does it explain the source of those qualities of will and conduct which we describe as good or moral? If not, the theory of Utilitarianism, even in its modified and improved form, does not supply all the demands of the problem; that is, does not explain everything. But whether it is defective or not is a matter which can be postponed for the moment, and we shall now turn to the consideration of its motive efficiency as a theory.

We must keep clear the distinction between the motive efficiency of a theory, and the motive efficiency of any particular datum of consciousness, which may be an element recognized by the theory. The motive-power of a theory depends upon its recognizing some principle which tends to bring about conduct not yet realized; that is, ideal ends. The motive-power may be entirely distinct from the end itself, and perhaps in the case of the ideal end it may be the very weakness of the ideal in competition with actual influences that makes it necessary to obtain another motive efficient for obtaining that end. Hence the motive efficacy of a theory will be proportioned to the admission of principles qualified to stimulate the will beyond the mere recognition of an ideal which scientifically explains what ought to be. If the ideal have all the motive-power required for its own realization, no other motive agency needs to be appealed to. But if it had this efficiency as a fact the actual would coincide with it, and there would be no need of any explanatory principle other than the classificatory, and ethics as a moral science would not exist. At best it would only be a form of history. Undoubtedly the ideal should have motive efficiency, and in many cases it may have this power. When it does the ideal will be realized, and there will be no need of extrinsic motivation for attaining the end. But when it does not exercise an

influence for effecting its own realization, the theory of ethics cannot get beyond supplying explanatory demands, unless it find a motive efficient other than the ideal for directing conduct to that end. Now, if we turn to the theological theory, we shall discover that it conformed precisely to this condition or conception of the case. The power which the theory exercised over human conduct came from the way in which it utilized the motives of fear or respect for the divine authority, while the ideal end to be attained might indeed be something quite different. The motive efficiency of the theory did not, or need not, consist solely in its explanatory datum, but in the recognition of a force having more power to overcome the competition of lower agencies than the ideal; and even if it did not produce ideally moral conduct in all respects, it did more than the bare cognition of the ideal seemed able to do. But all this motive efficiency was completely annihilated when the assumption of the divine existence was put in the crucible of scepticism, and we were left either to prove that assumption and reduce ethics to a dependence upon theology, or to construct some other theory or ground of conduct. This attempt, as we have seen, has been made by Utilitarianism, and we have to inquire whether it supplies the motive efficiency of the theory which it supplants.

In so far as Utilitarianism uses pleasure as a mere explanation of actual conduct it cannot be said to possess motive efficiency at all, because in this feature of its function it is not dealing with an ideal end which it is desirable to make imperative. In this limited conception pleasure is not conceived as an end to be attained, but as a conception to which actual facts can be reduced. Motive efficiency in morals must attach to principles aiming to realize the ideal, not to explain the actual. It is true that pleasure, when it explains actual conduct, has also been the motive efficient in producing this conduct; but if it represents a force in human nature which inevitably determines action, it cannot be said to represent the ideal, because this does not inevitably produce action in conformity with itself. Morals refer to what is not done as well as to what is, and its imperatives imply that the end

represented by them may or may not be realized, according as the will decides. Two possible conceptions—that of pleasure as an actual motive and as an ideal end—are thus at the basis of the ethical principle, so that when pleasure is conceived as the necessary determinant of action it cannot, as Kant has remarked, be an object of obligation at all; for its necessity excludes the idea of alternatives of choice which is the condition of moral conduct. Hence it cannot be used as the free motive efficient for realizing an ideal end beyond itself. Consequently Utilitarianism can have no motive-power as a theory, but only explanatory efficacy, unless it either recognizes an ideal which is more than unqualified pleasure, or some principle other than pleasure to induce action with reference to this ideal end. As we have shown, it does recognize at least a proximate ideal when it distinguishes between quantity or quality of pleasure. But precisely because this difference of quantity or quality is an ideal, it is something which is not uniformly realized, and we find it quite a general fact of experience that it is the weakness of the ideal in competition with lower impulses that prevents its attainment. Whenever this is the case Utilitarianism contains no principle having motive efficiency to substitute for the impotency of motive-power in the ideal. We found that the theological view did possess this characteristic, but in default of the security of its first postulate we have been obliged to look elsewhere for a determinant to do its work.

Now, it is the theory of Moralism which supplies this want. Its fundamental principle is duty, obligation, the categorical imperative, or a state of consciousness, which may act as a force of inhibition upon inclinations stronger than the ideal, and as an impulse to achieve the highest good or ideal, recognized by the mind as binding. We must be careful to remark, however, that this motivation may be employed to realize the end adopted by Utilitarianism, and does not require the setting up of some other end than happiness, although such as are not satisfied with that view are privileged to choose another. What this different end may be, or whether it is legitimate or not, it is not necessary to determine. It is

all the same whether we hold that happiness or something else is the ideal. For in any case the ideal requires additional motive help for its realization, or there is no use for ethics at all. Hence Utilitarianism cannot dispense with the principles of obligation, as is clearly admitted by Mill. That is, to say, Moralism has, or recognizes, a motive efficient which the utilitarian must admit. The theory is, therefore, not *necessarily* in conflict with that view, and can be so only when it insists upon an end other than pleasure as the ideal. But such a difference does not alter its motive efficiency, as designed to enforce conduct which inclination is not strong enough to realize. But while the categorical imperative may supplement the defective motive efficiency of Utilitarianism, and thus give Moralism a merit which its competitor does not possess, the question arises whether Moralism exercises any explanatory power; that is, does it explain any facts, or does the principle which it invokes determine any qualities that are the object of moral judgment? Does Moralism show how the character of conduct is affected by its principle, as Utilitarianism attempts to show by the criterion of pleasure?

This question can be clearly answered. If pleasure without qualification be the highest good and men always seek it, moral imperatives will be superfluous as motives for inducing the pursuit of such an end. Ethics would be as unnecessary as it is to tell men to eat or to breathe. They seek the good instinctively, and while we might call their conduct good, it would not be with any feeling that such approval acted in a way to encourage it, or indicated any moral interest in it. The *instinctive* pursuit of an end is not a virtue. We may be glad to see it, but we cannot expect to affect it by our approbation. But if we add to such an invariable pursuit of pleasure the rational consciousness of its value as an end and make it an obligation to seek it, the obedience of such an imperative takes on a new character, or the pursuit of pleasure would have a new merit of another kind. The imperative might not be necessary so far as external consequences are concerned, but consciousness is so qualified that it may even transfigure an instinct by subordinating its end to rational supervision

and control. It will give merit and virtue to conduct which instinct, valuable as it is, cannot do. If this be true where the ideal is always sought, by supposition, how much more is it true where it has not force enough of its own power to obtain realization? As a fact no utilitarian holds that the ideal is always sought, and so he sets up pleasure in some qualified form or amount as the ideal. If this be not actually sought, and if it be weaker in motive-power than some other lower inclinations, obedience to an imperative representing the ideal gives conduct a quality which it would not have in following the lower, and which it does not have in seeking a personal interest, however this interest may coincide with duty. Conduct from the sentiment of duty is testimony to the strength of character, no matter what end is its object, and hence it determines a merit which no motive of personal or even extra-personal pleasure can possess. It is not necessary even that the end at which it aims shall be realized. The good will is sufficient to decide the merit of the act and the agent, absolutely considered. If the action miscarries in its effects, the only want requiring to be supplied is knowledge. The element insuring stability of character is secured in the respect for the categorical imperative, which, in addition to acting as a motive efficient to realize the ideal, be it pleasure or anything else, also explains what it is that constitutes strictly moral action and moral character, at least of the highest type. Such a conclusion vindicates for Moralism theoretical as well as practical value, explanatory as well as motive efficiency,—theoretical value in that it satisfies our curiosity about the principle which constitutes the peculiar quality of moral conduct and character, and practical value in that it supplies a supplementary motive to realize an ideal unequal to the motivation expected of it.

That the sentiment of duty, or some such principle, is the basis of virtue is virtually admitted by Bentham in a remarkable passage directly contradicting the main thesis of his doctrine. In this passage he says that virtue is of the nature of a struggle against inclination. It will not do to say that pleasure determines good conduct and then reverse this judg-

ment by admitting that virtue can be attained only by resistance to that impulse. But Bentham here unconsciously makes a concession to common sense and to Moralism. I do not think it true that there must always be a struggle with inclination in order that the conduct may be virtuous; but there must always be that which a struggle implies,—namely, respect for a law of duty,—and this it is which determines morality, whether the end be utilitarian or not.

With this conclusion it will be observed by any ordinary reader how the various theories of ethics may be made complementary of each other, each supplying a datum not developed by the others. But I cannot take the space to point out in detail the extent to which such a reconciliation can be carried. I must leave that work to the judgment of the reader. The chief consideration to be noted, as a conclusion of what has been said of the functions of ethical theory, is the tendency to the predominance of “practical” interests exhibited in the whole history of its discussions. By this tendency, I mean the disposition to throw the importance of ethical theory upon its recognition of a principle having motive efficiency rather than merely scientific or explanatory power. We have seen that the theological theory retained no scientific interest after it lost its motive efficiency. Nobody cared anything about the metaphysical grounds of morality when the fear or respect for divine authority ceased to sustain the moral and social order. The great want came to be, not so much a scientific explanation of the source of moral law, as a mode of inducing or compelling conformity to it, as believed by a part of the community, and perhaps admitted by the majority or all of it. The theory was expected not only to indicate the origin of moral law, but also to specify some invulnerable truth which could not be ignored in conduct. It might be an end which was to move us by fear or respect; but in either case it was to be a reason affecting the will rather than the intellect.

Similar observations apply to Utilitarianism. In so far as it merely explained actual conduct by scientifically reducing it to the unity of a single principle, the uniformity of hedonistic motivation, it excited little interest and as little contro-

versy, because it was assumed by its opponents to be too true that men were solely moved by pleasure as a fact. Hence it might explain something, But this was not what was demanded of an ethical theory: it must present a principle for moving the realization of the ideal. Hence it was when Utilitarianism set up the greatest quantity or the best quality of pleasure, both as indicating the ideal and as offering a compensating factor for the sacrifice of lower inclinations, that it excited any profound interest. This interest on the part of its advocates lay in the belief that a principle had been found which would influence the will more effectively than the motive of duty, which had to take the risk of defeat in competition with the inclinations. On the other hand, Moralism felt an interest in the principle, because it supposed and supposes that its motive efficiency is not in favor of virtue or of higher ideals involving a sacrifice. A complication arises in this way between the two theories. They both possess motive efficiency of a different kind. Utilitarianism, where duty and interest can be made in any way to coincide, recognizes a motive efficient which may induce good behavior when an abstract appeal to duty may fail. On the other hand, where the ideal of Utilitarianism is weaker than lower inclinations and cannot be reconciled with personal interest, no motive efficient but that of Moralism can avail against desire. What the two theories may explain in these cases is of little import compared with the factor which is wanted to affect the will. Hence the main interest in theoretic ethical discussion turns upon the principle which tends to move the will in the right direction rather than that which merely satisfies the intellect. A completely satisfactory theory would be one with both factors. But the existing theories combine them in different degrees, and controversy prevails precisely in proportion to the predominance of one mental instinct over another. The influence of "practical" interests, however, has always succeeded in giving the preference to those which have concentrated attention upon the element of motive efficiency.

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